

Future of N.Va. road projects hinge on VDOT

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Nothing's a sure thing when it comes to choosing which road projects will receive state funding, officials said Monday.

The Virginia Department of Transportation will have to cut its \$10.1 billion Six Year Improvement Plan by as much as \$2.7 billion, VDOT Interim Commissioner Ray Pethel told Northern Virginia residents at a public hearing.

Officials will be eliminating or delaying the construction dates of projects until mid-May, when they release a draft of how scarce transportation dollars will be spent.

The former six-year plan was shelved after Gov. Mark R. Warner called the plan a "wish list" and an unrealistic proposal. A rough draft of the new transportation plan was released in December, including 1,400 state-wide projects, of which more than 200 are in Northern Virginia.

Road projects in the region total \$622 million, the largest portion of VDOT's plan for 2003 to 2008.

Some projects and their estimated costs include:

■ In Alexandria, Monroe Street-Route 1 bridge replacement, \$29 million; widening of King Street near 30th Street, \$33.7 million; and Mill Road realignment at Stovall Street, \$2.4 million.

■ In Arlington County, new bridge by Routes 50 and 27, \$14 million; revamping Route 50 interchange, \$12.7 million; and enhancements to the commuter assistance program, \$1.4 million.

■ In Fairfax County, new Route 29 interchange at Route 28, \$37.9 million; widening of Route 123 near North Davis Drive, \$38 million; widening of Route 1 near Telegraph Road, \$17.7 million; and widening of the Reston Parkway to the Loudoun County line, \$13.5 million.

■ In Loudoun County, traffic calming on Route 50 up to the Fauquier County line, \$13.6 million; Route 15 safety improvements between White's Ferry and Lucketts Road, \$6.8 million; and a new Route 7 interchange at the Algonkian Parkway, \$3 million.

■ In Prince William County, reconstruc-

tion of the Interstate 66 interchange at Route 29 in Gainesville, \$105 million; an additional I-66 lane and HOV lane between Route 29 West and Route 234 East, \$81.5 million; widening of the Route 123 bridge over the Occoquan River near Route 722, \$24.6 million; and replacement of the Route 1 bridge at Neabsco Creek, \$14.9 million.

But due to many factors — the recession, reduction in federal funding and new cost estimates — officials say there's not enough money to pay for every project.

"Except for the Springfield Interchange and Woodrow Wilson Bridge [projects], nothing's a sure thing," Joan Morris, VDOT spokeswoman, said Monday. "The commitment of the governor and [transportation] secretary [Whittington Clement] is to have a realistic plan."

Projects that can be built in six years will be given the priority, she said.

Local officials made a final plea for road funding in their jurisdictions at Monday's hearing in Fairfax City. The last VDOT public hearings will be held today in Culpeper.